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ABSTRACT

Parents' behavior as perceived by an adolescent population admitted to the adolescent crisis Ward at USC Medical Center is analyzed. The sample consisted of 86 patients who were admitted to the adolescent crisis ward during 1969 and 1970. The population could be divided according to four distinct crisis groups: (1) the suicidal group; (2) the aggressive group; (3) the psychotic group; and (4) the drug-induced psychotic group. Questionnaires were given out and data was analyzed in reference to various questions. It was found that the parents of the patients in the Adolescent Crisis Ward are perceived as significantly more punitive than parents of a control group of normal low socioeconomic children. It was also found that the perception of parental behavior by psychiatrically disturbed adolescents in a crisis ward can be described in terms of three dimensions: the nurturing parent, the punishing parent, and the bipolar parent. Finally it was found that the four crisis groups are not significantly different with respect to their perception of parental behavior. (WS)

ADOLESCENTS IN CRISIS: CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL BEHAVIOR*

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Literature abounds with evidence that a child's perception of his parents is clearly related to his behavior in several ways. While delinquents perceive parents as overly permissive, child guidance patients and maladjusted normals are more apt to report parents as psychologically excessively controlling. All deviant groups are more likely to report parents as punitive, rejecting and neglecting than their matched controls (Cox, 1962; Goldin, 1969; Medinnus, 1965; Schaefer, 1965; Williams, 1958).

As a part of a pilot study of adolescents' crisis behavior and their life situations, the Bronfenbrenner Parent Behavior Questionnaire (BPB) was used to analyze parents' behavior as perceived by an adolescent population admitted to the Adolescent Crisis Ward at USC Medical Center. The sample of this study consisted of 86 patients (between 12 and 18 years of age), 33 males and 53 females who were admitted to the adolescent crisis ward during 1969 and 1970. The population included four distinct crisis groups: 1) the suicidal group, 2) the agressive group, 3) the psychotic group, and 4) the drug-induced psychotic group (Sinay, Yusin, and Nihira, 1971).

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The BPB consists of 15 subscales (Siegelman, 1965). Each subscale consists of 3 statements concerning parental behavior. The adolescents were asked to indicate the extent to which the statements in the questionnaire were true of how their parents act toward them. They were asked to respond to the BPB questionnaire referring to their mothers and fathers separately. Since some of the patients are living with only one of their parents, a total of 80 patients completed the questionnaire referring to their mothers, and 70 patients completed the questionnaire referring to their fathers.

We examined the data in reference to the following three questions: 1) Do the patients in the Adolescent Crisis Ward differ significantly from normal school age children with respect to their perception of parental behavior as indicated in their response to the 15 BPB subscales? 2) Is there a difference in the factor structure of the perception of parental behavior by the patients in the Crisis Ward and by normal school age children? 3) Is there a significant difference between the four crisis groups with respect to their perception of parental behavior?

To answer the first question: Do the patients in the Adolescent Crisis Ward differ from normal school age children with respect to their perception of parental behavior. We compared our data with the data published by Siegelman who administered the BPB questionnaire to 4th, 5th and 6th grade children from a low socioeconomic area

in New York city. The comparison of means of 15 subscales between the two groups revealed that the parents of the adolescents in the crisis ward are perceived as significantly more punitive, i.e., they use physical as well as nonphysical punishment such as deprivation of previleges and social relationships or overt rejection of their children. These parents are also significantly more intrusive and restrictive of the child's behavior and have high achievement demands in the eyes of their children.

Our second question was: Is there a difference in the factor structure of parental behavior as perceived by the adolescents in the crisis ward and by normal school age children? In regard to this question, two separate factor analyses were performed: one for the rating of parental behavior and another for the rating of maternal behavior. In addition to the 15 subscale scores, the subject's sex was included in the analyses as a variable to observe possible interactions between the factors and the sex of the subjects. The correlation matrices consisting of 15 BPB subscales and the subject's sex were submitted to the principal component extraction program with multiple R^2 for estimate for communalities (Dixon, 1969). In both analyses, the first four extracted factors were rotated orthogonally to the varimax criterion (Kaiser, 1958).

Description of the Rotated Factors

Factor I - Nurturing

In both the rating of mother and the rating of father, Factor I is defined primarily by five BPB subscales, i.e., Nurturance, Affective Reward, Parental Teaching (Instrumental companionship), Parental Participation (Affiliative companionship) and Principled Discipline. This factor is almost identical with a factor labeled "Loving" delineated in an earlier study by Siegelman (Siegelman, 1965). The factor depicts a parent who is perceived by the child as being open, willing to listen, supportive, warm and affectionate. He or she enjoys being with the child, is readily available when the child needs them and helps the child mature. The significant loading of Principled Discipline on this factor indicates the child's feeling that his parents provide reasonable limits to his activities, and enforce these rules and limits.

Factor II - Punishing

Factor II, in the rating of both parents, is primarily defined by three BPB subscales, i.e., Social Isolation, Physical Punishment and Deprivation of Privileges. This factor is similar to a factor labeled "Punishment" delineated by the earlier study (Siegelman, 1965). This factor characterizes a parent who punishes his or her child by physical or psychological means such as witholding things that are

important to the child, i.e., the witholding of materials or social relationships. The subscale called Affective Punishment is also loaded moderately. This seems to indicate that, in the child's perception, the parent punishes him by making him feel ashamed and worthless. The subscale called Achievement Demand is also loaded moderately in the ratings of mother but not in the ratings of father. This appears to suggest that a punishing mother is seen by her child as having high achievement demands as shown by her insistence on the child working harder and achieving more than other children.

Factor III - Firm Control vs. Lax Control

With respect to Factor III, there are some similarities as well as some differences in children's perception between maternal behavior and paternal behavior. Both factors, i.e., the factor for mothers and the factor for fathers, are similar in that they represent a bipolar dimension of Firm Control vs. Lax Control. At one end of this dimension is a strict and intrusive parent who insists on knowing what the child is doing, and telling him exactly how he should behave. When such control is exercised by the father, he is seen as overly protective as well; however, this is not true in the children's perception of maternal controlling behavior. On the other end of this dimension is an extremely permissive and indulging

parent who is seen by the child as one that he can talk into most anything.

This factor is somewhat similar to a factor labeled "Demanding" which was isolated in the previous study (Siegelman, 1965). In the previous study, the subscale, Indulgence, is loaded on Factor I, "Nurturing", while in the present study, Indulgence is loaded on Factor III, defining the bipolar dimension of Firm Control vs. Lax Control. This means that while grade school children see Indulgence as a quality of a "nurturing parent", the adolescents in a crisis ward see Indulgence as a lack of parental control or even indifference on the part of parents. This factor is then a bipolar dimension which indicates the degree to which the parent exercises control over the child's behavior by making rules and regulations and by setting limits to the child's activities. Parental behavior as seen by the adolescent population may vary from excessively rigid control to extreme lack of control.

Factor IV - Rejection (for the rating of father)

Factor IV for the rating of father is defined by the subscales of Expressive Rejection and Affective Punishment. This factor depicts a father who becomes emotionally upset and overtly rejects his child when the child misbehaves. He punishes the child verbally by nagging and scolding which results in devaluation of the child's

self-esteem and sense of worth. Although this rejection factor emerged only for the fathers and not for the mothers, the factor may have a potential significance since the children's perceptions of parental punishment and parental rejection have never been clearly delineated in the past factor analytic studies.

Factor IV - Sex Differences (for the rating of mother)

Factor IV for the rating of mothers is defined by the subscale of Physical Punishment and the sex variable. It merely indicates that mothers tend to use physical means in the punishing of boys more often than girls as reflected in children's responses. The variable of sex is included in the analysis to test whether there is a significant difference between boys and girls with respect to their perception of parental behavior. The results indicated that there is no difference between the sexes with the exception of this factor, use of physical punishment by mothers.

To summarize the results of the factor analyses, it is possible to describe the perception of parental behavior by psychiatrically disturbed adolescents in a crisis ward in terms of three general dimensions: 1) the nurturing parent who enjoys being with the child, and is open, supportive, warm, affectionate, and encouraging for the child to mature, 2) the punishing parent who uses physical or psychological means of punishment in child discipline which result

in the child's feeling of self-devaluation and worthlessness, and 3) a bipolar dimension which describes the excessively strict and intrusive parent and the extremely permissive and indulging parents. All three of these dimensions have been delineated and described in a number of previous studies. The fourth factor, which appeared in the present study, may suggest the existence of another dimension; a rejecting parent. However, this finding must be supported by further empirical evidence.

The last and major question in this study was: Is there a significant difference between the four crisis groups with respect to their perception of parental behavior? As indicated previously, our subjects consist of four crisis groups distinguished by the type of crisis behavior shown prior to the psychiatric hospitalization. They are the suicidal group, the agressive group, the psychotic group (delusions and hallucinations), and the drug-induced psychotic group. Separate analysis of variance for each of the four factor scores indicated that means of the four crisis groups were not significantly different in any of the factors. This means that, in terms of the factorial dimensions I described in this study, the four crisis groups are not significantly different with respect to their perception of parental behavior.

Additional information obtained from the same population suggests that certain combinations of life situations can produce sufficient stress

on adolescents to initiate different types of crisis behavior. The five most important situational factors that contributed, in varying degree, to the differentiation of the four crisis groups were: 1) use of hashish or heroin, 2) lack of close friends and a feeling that peers do not like them, 3) object loss or loss of important others, 4) physical punishment by parents, and 5) being out of school and unemployed (Sinay, Yusin and Nihira, 1971). There is ample evidence that children's perception of parental behavior is related to their general psychological adjustment. However, the specific form of their crisis behavior seems more likely to be determined by certain combinations of other situational factors in their life situation.

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To Accompany

Adolescents in Crisis: Children's Perception of Parental Behavior

Summary of Bronfenbrenner's Children's Rating of Parental Behavior

1. Nurturance
    1. I can talk with my mother (father) about everything.
    2. My mother (father)comforts me and helps me when I have troubles.
    3. My mother (father) is there for me when I need her (him).
2. Affective Reward:
    4. My mother (father) says nice things about me to other people.
    5. My mother (father) is very affectionate with me.
    6. My mother (father) praises me when I've done something good.
3. Instrumental Companionship (Parental Teaching):
    7. My mother (father) teaches me things when I want to learn.
    8. My mother (father) helps me with hobbies and handiwork.
    9. My mother (father) helps me with school work when I don't understand something.
4. Affiliative Companionship (Parental Participation):
    10. My mother (father) goes on pleasant walks and outings with me.
    11. My mother (father) is happy when with me.
    12. My mother(father) enjoys talking with me.
5. Prescriptive:
    13. My mother (father) expects me to help around the house.
    14. My mother (father) wants me to run errands.
    15. My mother (father) expects me to keep my own things in order.
6. Social Isolation:
    16. My mother (father) punishes me by sending me out of the room.
    17. As punishment my mother (father) forbids me to play with other children.
    18. As punishment my mother (father) sends me to bed early.
7. Expressive Rejection:
    19. My mother (father) holds it before me that other children behave better than I do.
    20. My mother (father) nag at me.
    21. My mother (father) scolds me and yells at me.

8. Physical Punishment:
    22. My mother (father) threatens to spank me.
    23. My mother (father) spanks me.
    24. My mother (father) slaps me.
9. Deprivation of Privileges:
    25. My mother (father) punishes me by making me do extra work.
    26. When I am bad my mother (father) forbids me to do things I especially enjoy.
    27. My mother (father) punishes me by taking my favorite things away.
10. Protectiveness:
    28. My mother (father) comes with me when I go someplace for the first time to make sure that everything goes well.
    29. My mother (father) worries that I can't take care of myself.
    30. My mother (father) won't let me roam around because something might happen to me.
11. Power:
    31. My mother (father) insists that I get permission first before I go to a movie, carnival or some other entertainment.
    32. My mother (father) wants to know exactly how I spend my money when I want to buy some little things for myself.
    33. My mother (father) tells me exactly when I should come home.
12. Achievement Demands:
    34. My mother (father) insists I make a special effort in anything I do.
    35. My mother (father) demands that I do better than other children.
    36. My mother (father) insists that I get particularly good marks in school.
13. Affective Punishment:
    37. My mother (father) appears disappointed and sad when I misbehave.
    38. My mother (father) makes me feel ashamed or guilty when I misbehave.
    39. My mother (father) tells me, "I don't want to have any more to do with you", when I misbehave.
14. Principled Discipline:
    40. My mother (father) is just when punishing me.
    41. When I must do something, my mother (father) explains why.
    42. My mother (father) finds it difficult to punish me. (This item has been excluded from the present study.)
15. Indulgence:
    43. I can talk my mother (father) into most anything.
    44. My mother (father) lets me off easy when I misbehave.
    45. My mother (father) finds it difficult to punish me.

Description of Obtained Factors (Varimax Rotation)

Children's Perception of Fathers

Factor I - Nurturing		Loadings*
1	Nurturance	.83
2	Affective Reward	.88
3	Parental Teaching	.72
4	Parental Participation	.86
14	Principled Discipline	.56

Factor II - Punishing		Loadings
5	Prescriptive	.40
6	Social Isolation	.87
8	Physical Punishment	.70
9	Deprivation of Privileges	.74
13	Affective Punishment	.48 (IV, .49)

Factor III - Firm Control vs. Lax Control		Loadings
10	Protectiveness	.56
11	Power	.71
12	Achievement Demands	.56
15	Indulgence	-.55

Factor IV - Rejecting		Loadings
7	Expressive Rejection	.67
13	Affective Punishment	.49 (II, .48)

Children's Perception of Mothers

Factor I - Nurturing		Loadings
1	Nurturance	.85
2	Affective Reward	.77
3	Parental Teaching	.90

* Factor loadings larger than .40 are listed.

Factor I - Nurturing (continued)		Loadings
4	Parental Participation	.93
5	Prescriptive	.40
7	Expressive Rejection	-.44 (II,.45)
14	Principled Discipline	.61

Factor II - Punishing		Loadings
6	Social Isolation	.71
7	Expressive Rejection	.45 (I,-.44)
8	Physical Punishment	.61 (IV,.43)
9	Deprivation of Privileges	.83
11	Power	.51 (III,.66)
12	Achievement Demands	.44
13	Affective Punishment	.59

Factor III - Firm Control vs. Lax Control		Loadings
11	Power	.66 (II,.51)
15	Indulgence	-.48

Factor IV - Sex Difference		Loadings
8	Physical Punishment	.43 (II,.61)
16	Sex (Girl: 1; boy: 2)	.51